

Mid Term Assignment-

Area Study Centre (Central Asia, Russia, China)

Course. Central Asia and Pakistan

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Hybrid Warfare: Hypothesis of Military Cognitive Dissonance

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Word Count- 3770

Dated. 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

## Hybrid Warfare: Hypothesis of Military Cognitive Dissonance

*Abstract. For last one decade the etymology of Hybrid Warfare has caught the imagination of scholars, statesmen and military. The concept was put forward by Russian General Valery Gerasimov and is synonym with Russian President Vladimir Putin . This article in the light of Historicism, and Theory of War, argues that the hypothesis has nothing extraordinary new in it, yet the concept is thought provoking further the paper stress the pitfalls for liberal society due to the acceptance of the doctrine by own military. It concludes with the statement that Hybrid Warfare is more pertinent to Russia and Europe than in own scenario.*

### Introduction.

War is an integral part of human history, the earliest record of warfare dates back to the Egyptians waging war in 2000 BC. With the passage of time, new innovations in technology and most of them as a by-product of war have made the way a war is waged ; more lethal . At present, a new form of warfare is being highlighted which is attributed to Russia ‘as used today in reference to Russia, hybrid warfare.’ It has its roots in Russian Chief of the General Staff, General Valery Gerasimov’s address to the cadets and later publication of his article in February 2013.<sup>1</sup>

It refers to Moscow’s use of a broad range of subversive instruments, many of which are non-military, to further Russian national interests.’<sup>2</sup> The term Hybrid Warfare originates in 2012-13,<sup>3</sup> after Russia annexed Crimea and interfered in Ukraine, in both cases there was minimal loss of lives and destruction and yet the aim of the state was accomplished. This in turn has alarmed the adversaries of Russia and also has created a great interest for other nations on the ontological aspects of this form of warfare. This in turn has stirred a debate on the very essence of this Hybrid Warfare and its implication in the region. NATO and USA the chief rivals of Russia also have different connotations on this, at one end, the USA military acknowledging that they are unable to fully grasp this new paradigm and on the other hand the western military scholars and commanders are expressing their reservations and forming hypothesis and theories on the future events basing upon Russian doctrine. *If strategy, in whatever era, is “the art of creating power,” then so-called hybrid warfare is*

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<sup>1</sup> Valery Gerasimov, “The Value of Science is in the Foresight, new challenges demand rethinking the forms and methods of carrying out combat operations,”trans, Robert Coalson, *Military Industrial Kurier*, 27 February 2013.

<sup>2</sup> *Understanding Russian “Hybrid Warfare” and What Can be Done About It.* Testimony of Charles Chivvis before the Committee on Armed Services , USA House of Representatives, 22 march 2017. Rand Corporation

<sup>3</sup>Eric Reichborn, Patrick Cullen. *What is Hybrid Warfare ?* Norweigian Institute of International Affairs (Copenhagen, 2016). <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/52131503.pdf>

*merely the latest attempt by revisionist actors to create and exploit a form of power to meet their end.*<sup>4</sup>

This paper basing upon Historicism of warfare and theories of international politics analyse the concept of Hybrid Warfare (HW) in order to reach a conclusion that whether there is really anything new in this kind of warfare? and if so, how it differs from past and inherently its affects the region of Central Asia, of which Pakistan is very much part of.

## War and State; an Ontological Historicism

Violence is very much part of human nature, as the very first act of violence , murder of Abel by Cain; was over jealousy.<sup>5</sup> Plato in his *Laws* highlights that man remains in a constant state of war either with himself or with his neighbours and that includes neighbouring city states. For what most humans call peace he held to be only a name; in fact, for everyone there always exists by nature an undeclared war among all cities.<sup>6</sup> Aristotle<sup>7</sup> in his *Politics* , asserts that state itself is a creation of nature and as such man is a social animal. In our mankind history, it seems as if war was always present in one form or the other. Chinese philosopher Sun Tzu in his work *Art of War*<sup>8</sup> a 500 BC manuscript advices rulers to *wage war only when they are sure of victory...all warfare is based upon deception... the supreme art of war is to subdue enemy without fighting.*<sup>9</sup> The first detailed account of war emerges from Alexander the Great campaigns of 330-323 BC in Asia and Africa including present day Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is during the Battle of Hydaspus 323 BC that the use of psychological means to lower the morale of Alexander was adopted , when the presence of elephants among the Indian forces were a matter of concerned to Greeks and they resorted by setting up numerous fires around to over arch their numerical strength.<sup>10</sup> Later Asoka in 200 BC becomes the very first ruler to denounce the war as it brings miseries on people<sup>11</sup> , however this viewpoint and Buddhist philosophy has seldom been adopted by nations. Romans succeeded in establishing an empire stretching from across Europe, Asia and Africa based upon their military might. Islam overthrew Persian and Roman Empires on the strength of its military prowess of speed and surprise.

At the turn of last millennium the way of warfare focussed on the present day Central Asia when Mongols under Chenghiz Khan and his successors adopted deception and psychological means as the principles of their warfare. The tales of their terror and brutality would precede as a wind among their opponents and these were very carefully planted

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<sup>4</sup> Sean Monaghan *Countering Hybrid Warfare, so what for the future joint forces ?* Prism No.2. [https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/prism/prism\\_8-2/PRISM\\_8-2\\_Monaghan.pdf](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/prism/prism_8-2/PRISM_8-2_Monaghan.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> *Book of Genesis*.

<sup>6</sup> Plato *The Laws of Plato, Book 1*, 625.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle *Politics, Book 1*.

<sup>8</sup> Sun Tzu *Art of War*, trans, Lionel Giles (Hong Kong:Turtle, 2016), pp-2-16.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, pp,34-78.

<sup>10</sup> Arrian *Anabasis of Alexander* trans E. Chinnock (London: Hodder & Stoughton,1876).also see J.McCrindle *The Invasion of India by Alexander The Great as described by Arrian, Q Curtis, Diodorus, Plutarch and Justin*,(London: Constable,1896).

<sup>11</sup> Radhakumud Mookerji *Asoka* (London: Macmillian,1928), preface.

through an efficient network of spies resultantly the forts and cities would lose the will to resist. Mongols had present day Russia under their influence and later in 1380-1405, Moscow was captured by Amir Timur. Tamerlane wrote a detailed account of his theory and philosophy of warfare in which the stress is on destroying the will of resistance of the enemy and the public.<sup>12</sup> Nicolai Machiavelli in his *Art of War* pleads to rulers and princes to have no morality in waging war on enemy, the aim should be the attainment and retention of power. Hugo Grotius a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch jurist declared that war is not among man but among the states.<sup>13</sup> Thus it is the state that wages war for the preservation of its interest. In post Vienna 1815 when the present day modern state system emerges in Europe, a new form of warfare was set in motion in which the capitalism or the monetary benefit was the principal aim of the European nations. Carl Von Clausewitz in *On War* which is taken as a standard text book on the subject of war in many countries including Pakistan highlighted that 'war is an extension of politics by other means...an act of violence'.

The race for colonies resulted in wars among the European and later colonial powers to an extent that world saw the true menace of modern war in 1914-1918. Lenin the chief architect of Soviet revolution of 1917 termed the war as the result of Capitalist Imperialism.<sup>14</sup> Another Great War erupted in 1939-45 and it is remembered as Total War in history as every mean to achieve victory was used. No morality was put in consideration when American dropped atomic bombs over the civilian population of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in which over a million children, women, old people, sick and new born were annihilated without any pause of human mercy.

Fifth Column as a form of warfare emerged in Spanish Civil War of 1939, a kind of saboteurs who aimed at the morale of the population and sowed dissent and despondency through rumours. *clandestine group or faction of subversive agents who attempt to undermine a nation's solidarity by any means at their disposal.*<sup>15</sup> German propagandist Goebbels is attributed to say that, speak so much lies that it is taken as truth. In modern time, in post WWII, the world was divided in ideological groups and poles, as such the power of soft approach, to capture the heart and minds of opposing poles and consolidating own population and adherents became furious effort. In USA under McCarthyism<sup>16</sup> the segments of society were purged having soft views on communism. Cold wars and that includes Vietnam War was another manifesto of capitalism, in which the menace of communism was exaggerated to have own public supporting the war.

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<sup>12</sup> *Mulfuzat Timuri autobiographical memoirs of Mughul Emperor Timur*, trans, Charles Stewart ( London: Allen, 1830), pp,76-100.

<sup>13</sup> M.G. Forsyth edited, *The Theory of International Affairs selected texts from Gentilli to Traitschke* (London: Allen,1970), p – 73.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Lenin *Imperialism Highest stage of Capitalism* ( London: Lawrence, 1917),pp 3-17.

<sup>15</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Fifth column". Encyclopedia Britannica, 20 Nov. 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/fifth-column>. Accessed 28 February 2021.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph McCarthy was an American senator who in 1952-54 sacked and jailed thousands of Americans for having soft corner for Communism. Achter, Paul J.. "McCarthyism". Encyclopedia Britannica, 13 Jan. 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/McCarthyism>. Accessed 28 February 2021.

Gulf War of 1990 can be truly termed as a war of media, by this time the satellite television had made inroad, and as such a global viewership was available to the USA and its allies, to convince the world population on the legality and morality of their action. In the same breath, the ideological opposing pole, USSR broke down in 1991-92 and also with tearing down of the Berlin Wall brought a paradigm shift in world politics. The USSR was shattered and in its aftermath the dozen new countries took birth, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Crimea, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, to name a few. However the biggest change was, that world became Uni-Polar with USA acting as the policeman of the world.

## **Part II. Vladimir Putin and Hybrid Warfare**

Vladimir Putin (born 1952) came into power in 1999 and since then has been in power either as president or as prime minister of Russia and this makes him as one of the longest serving head of state in the world. He has as a matter of fact seen and interacted with four different American presidents and half a dozen British Prime Ministers, only Angela Merkel of Germany rivals Putin in term of longevity of power. Putin's rise to power and the European power politics or for that matter the global politics underwent a dramatic change in the aftermath of 9/11. The incident acted as a catalyst for a global action against the terrorism and NATO and other countries under the banner of USA were deployed in Afghanistan and later the war actions were taken in Iraq.

World witness a new change in Arab politics with revolution in Egypt and other Arab countries, where public outrage that started from Algeria and Morocco spread into other countries resultantly Libya became one of its worst affected example. Foreign troops (NATO) invaded Libya under the garb of militia and since then the entire country is in ruins.

Similar acts also took place in Ukraine in 2013 where popular uprising, agitation and street unrest forced elected president Viktor Yanukovich to flee the country and take refuge in Russia in 2014. In the same year in March 2014, through a referendum, Crimea a part of Ukraine voted in favour of being a part of Russia thus it was formally signed on 14 March 2014. These actions of Russia are termed as the hybrid warfare by the scholars. Syrian crisis compelled Putin to communicate with American people '*RECENT events surrounding Syria have prompted me to speak directly to the American people and their political leaders. It is important to do so at a time of insufficient communication between our societies*'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Vladimir Putin "A Plea for caution from Russia" *New York Times*, 11 September, 2013. <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/09/12/opinion/putin-plea-for-caution-from-russia-on-syria.html>

## Gerasimov Doctrine.

*“In the 21st century we have seen a tendency toward blurring the lines between the states of war and peace. Wars are no longer declared and, having begun, proceed according to an unfamiliar template.”*<sup>18</sup> General Gerasimov the Russian military chief in an address to the military academy highlighted his concept on the present and future warfare; later an article was published by him.

Gerasimov analyse the current (2013) situation in the back ground of events taking place in Arab Spring, and ask the military science scholars to ‘foresight’ the coming decades. He stresses that , battles of wide frontage, mass frontal attacks and the lines drawn between strategy and tactics are blurred as now the battle can be affected through the remote distance. He forsee a battle formation made entirely of robots and carrying out a task.

The important aspect of his doctrine is the very acceptance that the **future warfare is different and as such yet to be identified . What of war it will be ? how or army should be organised ?**. General Gerasimov’s hypothesis is based upon the facts of Libya, where within a short span of time a regime was changed, in which special operations forces played key role, local population was agitated, no fly zone and sea blockade was imposed and in the end a human catastrophe . The key question that Gerasimov thus derives is the vulnerability of the state or allies, when a public uprising occurs and this can be exploited by the enemy. Thus , a country is virtually in a state of war all the time. To guard against such uprising. The use of informational technology attains a greater importance, airborne troops, air-ground co-operation to act swiftly is important.

Gerasimov , naturally is offering his hypothesis in the context of Russian military policy against the US and NATO designs and as such its implications for small or limited wars among small nations may not be applicable in near future.

## Russian War in Afghanistan- Test Case

Gerasimov in his paper and speech highlighted the success of Russian in Afghan War. Any analytical study will out rightly deny this claim, for the reason that it was the end of war in which former USSR had to depart in a hurry and with face lost; in the end the campaign itself was pivotal in the breakup of the USSR. During almost a decade long stay in Afghanistan, USSR or Russian army failed to win over the public less in Northern Afghanistan, the very basic core of present hypothesis of Hybrid War in winning the

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<sup>18</sup> Valery Gerasimov a Russian General Staff in his speech to Military Academy of Science at Moscow. Later printed as an article on 27 February 2013 in Military Industrial Courier. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346195526\\_Valery\\_Gerasimov's\\_Doctrine](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346195526_Valery_Gerasimov's_Doctrine)'.

objectives with the help of media, concentrating all resources under one command, use of special forces; all failed miserably in the face of an enemy whose roots are in tribal society. Thus the claim is a fallacy.

### **Prospects of Hybrid War in coming years.**

This paper does not outrightly reject the very thesis of Hybrid War, at present and in coming time with a new USA administration in power under President Biden, the prospectus of a Hybrid War in Europe is a very much reality. USA military do recognise the potential threat from USA's idea of a uni-polar world order, 'Russia can undertake conventional military actions in Eastern Europe and then can take the protective umbrella of nuclear arsenal thus thwarting any counter action'. It is in this background that Hybrid War as projected by Russians makes sense.

Russia will, should and have all the right to put forward his ideas and doctrine into the heart and minds of the population in order to make its own claim of a bi-polar world. Already this is very much on the ground as people and establishment across the globe are taking notice of this doctrine.

Acceptance and propagation of this Hybrid Warfare in developing countries more specifically in fascist regimes, countries where the military is flourishing on the fear of security, most of them hybrid in nature are most likely to exploit this concept to further tighten their control on the power. Myanmar is one recent example, where army has toppled the elected government and most likely will soon resort to the drumming of being victim of a hybrid warfare.

In case of Pakistan-India-Afghanistan, the prospect of Hybrid War are much more than perhaps anywhere else in world. The primary reason is the ideological and political differences among the three countries. Pakistan since independence has been weary of Afghanistan for 'Pashtun' and with India on Kashmir and because it works politically to agitate people on ideological grounds.

At present, in sub-continental scenario, both countries (Pakistan-India) are drum beating to their public on being victim of Hybrid War; there is a reality in both countries claim as being in a state of war, both have legitimate right to propagate their ideas and influence other's population. The view from Liberals is that such an approach put an untoward restrictions on the voice of the people, any political dissent can be termed as a part of Hybrid War from enemy. In case of Pakistan, which has undergone a two decade prolong war on militancy and terror, which was initiated with an unelected military dictator in power. Now, in the aftereffects of that war, there are certain areas and ethnic groups which suffered more than others, thus their voice of dissent is now being given the colour of this particular form of warfare.

## Conclusion .

Historically, there is nothing new in the hypothesis of Hybrid War, war through the ages has been fought and waged only with one aim, to achieve the aim. Thus every country when in a state of war seldom pays any heed to the morality; the moral issue in war is more of an individual rather than being accepted and adhered at structural level.

This paper do agree with the hypothesis that, era of mass frontal attacks and mass armies is over and future war will be more fought in order to win the minds of not only the population of the concerned country but also at global level; after all, all great states are always concerned about the verdict of history on their conduct of war.

In case of the most viable way to counter attack Hybrid War is to inculcate trust of state and its narrative among the citizens and this is possible only with acceptance of own short comings otherwise citizens will always have cognitive dissonance<sup>19</sup>. Hypothesis of Hybrid War as the history itself proves is nothing new yet at present is thriving on military cognitive dissonances especially among the NATO and Russian military systems.

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<sup>19</sup> **Cognitive dissonance**, the mental [conflict](#) that occurs when beliefs or assumptions are contradicted by new information. The unease or tension that the conflict arouses in people is relieved by one of several defensive maneuvers: they reject, explain away, or avoid the new information; persuade themselves that no conflict really exists; [reconcile](#) the differences; or resort to any other defensive means of preserving stability or order in their [conceptions](#) of the world and of themselves. The concept was developed in the 1950s by American psychologist [Leon Festinger](#) and became a major point of discussion and research. Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Cognitive dissonance". Encyclopedia Britannica, 5 Apr. 2019, <https://www.britannica.com/science/cognitive-dissonance>. Accessed 28 February 2021.



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